

Watermelon Sugar High

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Watermelon Sugar High

by [isntitcrazy](#)

Summary

The same could not be said about his next move. Even if it had technically been Sapnap who started it, it had been Dream who kept it going.

“I dare you to ask him out.”

At first, Dream had raised an eyebrow. For one: *who was him?* Two: *was Sapnap even being serious?*

Taking that dare was either the best or worst decision of Dream's life. Maybe both.

Notes

thank you to [millie dnfsinner](#) who betaed this for me !! here is their [their twitter](#) as well

it's funny because i kept talking to cab about speedrunning and the whole time i was like "hehe i'm writing a fic for you"

ANYWAYS i went through like 10 different ideas and this was the one that stuck, so here is some fake dating :D fic exchange yay !!

Dream was an idiot. A really, really big idiot; but he tried his best not to hurt people. And so far, he had a pretty decent success rate.

But maybe he should've known all along that he was going to break his streak eventually. Maybe he should've seen the moment it came to shatter, when he was sitting at a party with a suspiciously flavored drink in his hand, something fruity enough to trick him into thinking it wouldn't make his head spin.

And if Dream was stupid when he was sober, then he was a fucking idiot when he was drunk.

It was so easy to get him to do something. So *easy* to trick him into a greater mistake than he would make on his own, so easy to make him spill his drink all over some pretty boy's jeans; even if that one had been an accident on everyone's part, his slurred-out apologies certainly did not make the brunet look too much happier.

But that could be written up as an unfortunate mistake. Dream had never meant to stumble and leave his clothes all wet and sticky, had never meant to send him running in the direction of the bathroom with a displeased look on his face.

The same could not be said about his next move. Even if it had technically been Sappnap who started it, it had been Dream who kept it going.

"I dare you to ask him out."

At first, Dream had raised an eyebrow. For one: *who was him?* Two: *was Sappnap even being serious?*

Despite a grin on his face, Sappnap was, in fact, being serious. And *him* meant the pretty boy Dream had spilled his drink all over, and that dare meant Dream was on his feet to find him in the bathroom. It had taken a minor amount of convincing, but Dream wasn't one to back down from a dare.

All it had taken was one "*I bet you couldn't get him to say yes,*" from Sappnap, and Dream was gone. He could faintly hear the laughter from his friend on the couch behind him, but he was mostly distracted by the crushed red solo cup in his hand and his eyes for a head of dark hair.

He found him in the bathroom, door open where he stood beside the sink. Breaths were heavy and through his mouth, brows were knitted where he concentrated on the scrub of a half-wet towel on his soaked jeans.

It took him a minute to notice Dream standing in the doorway. But when he did, he frowned slightly.

"Oh," and Dream nearly stumbled upon hearing he had an accent, "it's you."

Half-drunk and high on life, Dream let himself grin like an arrogant madman. He leaned his shoulder up against the doorframe, clenching his fist tighter around the plastic cup just to hear the sound.

"It's me," he answered in a quip, hoping to god his words weren't slurred too pathetically. "I'm Dream, by the way."

The boy scoffed quietly, scraping the towel down the front of his jeans with increased fervor. “I know.”

Dream raised an eyebrow, pushing himself up off the doorframe. “You do?”

The turn of the brunet’s head felt lightning fast, eyes wider than they had been where he’d frozen completely in place. The towel in his hand dripped water onto the tile floor, quiet breaths falling past his lips when he looked for the quickest answer.

“Well, yeah,” he shrugged nonchalantly, but nothing else about his existence felt that casual. “People talk.”

Dream furrowed his eyebrows further, pointing at himself with the hand not clenched around a red solo cup.

“About me?” he asked, earning a nod in return. “All good things,” Dream laughed, “at least I hope.”

The brunet laughed and rolled his eyes, pushing the towel down the front of his jeans again.

“I guess.”

Dream grinned wider, feeling the way it tugged at the corners of his mouth in the smallest hint of strain. He stepped in just a little bit closer, not quite encroaching on the boy’s space but sneaking closer to him nonetheless. He leaned against the counter with a palm flat on the granite, cocked his head to the side with nails digging into a red plastic cup.

“Well,” he started, locking eyes with the boy through a strange air of tension, “what’s your name, pretty boy?”

And he didn’t miss the way his cheeks turned pink at the nickname, the way his hands faltered and he looked away. Nervous laughter filled the air between them and a damp towel fell into the sink.

“Um...” he hesitated, eyes flicking back to Dream’s for no more than a second, “it’s George.”

In a way that Dream had never found before, it made perfect sense. It drew the smile on his face impossibly wider, picking his weight up off the heel of his palm when he stood straight again. He wandered behind George to find the trash can by the sink, dropping crushed-up cups in on top of all the rest of them.

“Well, George,” and he turned back to face the boy in question, “I’m sorry I spilled my drink all over your jeans.” He gestured at the wet pants still clinging to George’s legs. “They look nice, maybe nicer without the alcohol.”

“Yeah,” George laughed beneath his breath. “They were my best jeans.”

Dream’s eyebrows furrowed, the grin on his face falling flat for a moment. And he stepped forward again, closing the space between him and George with a hand outstretched toward nothing in particular.

“I can replace them,” he insisted, earning another bout of nervous laughter in return.

“No, no, it’s fine—” George started to argue, but Dream didn’t let him finish.

“Or I could just take them off.”

It was a joke—clearly—but the pink on George’s face was decidedly not. He shook his head with a hand pressed to his forehead, fist clenching at the center of a forgotten towel in the sink.

“Oh my god.”

Dream laughed, and for a moment, he nearly forgot what he’d even come to the bathroom for.

“What?” he tried, “Too soon?”

George only shook his head again, lifting his head up to meet Dream’s eyes once again. Through all the unidentifiable tension, there was a grinning face in mirthful lightness. Dream wondered how he’d never met this boy before.

“You’re drunk anyways.”

Dream scoffed dramatically, feigned offense painting his grinning face red. “I’m getting sober!”

George rolled his eyes. “Sure.”

Dream considered putting up the rest of his fight, but his true intentions still lingered at the back of his mind. He remembered Sapnap’s amused laughter, he remembered the dares that danced like fire on the tip of his tongue.

He leaned against the sink counter again, looked through the open door for a moment as if there was something interesting to find. And George was wringing out the barely wet towel over the sink, nothing more than a few stray drops of water slipping down the drain.

“Well,” Dream started, regaining George’s attention from the rag in his hands, “I didn’t come to ask you for sex.”

George laughed, open-mouthed and unforgiving. Dream thought it looked good on him.

“Thank you,” he said with his pretty, toothy grin. “I would’ve said yes if you were sober, but—”

Dream leaned forward. “Wait, really?”

And like he wasn’t meant to hear those rushed words, George’s cheeks fell darker and his eyes dropped to the floor. Dream wondered if there was something interesting between the spaces of the tiles, but he wouldn’t dare tear his eyes away from George’s face to look for himself.

“Um,” George stumbled over more syllables than he said, “yeah.” And he scratched at the back of his neck, laughing nervously in a way that felt signature by then. “I’m kind of hoping you’ll forget this conversation by morning now.”

Dream laughed knowingly. “I never blackout.”

“Fuck.”

And with that lone profanity hanging heavy in the air between them, Dream laughed his way to the words he was almost too scared to say. He wondered *why* he felt so nervous—why his hands were sweaty, why he could feel every ounce of his weight on his knees, why his fingers were shaking against the granite of the countertop—because it was all *fake*.

None of it mattered anyways. And maybe that’s why it felt so daunting.

“I came to ask you on a date.”

It was Dream's turn to avert his eyes. He looked for something interesting in the pattern on the countertop, gaze landing on the back of his own hand where it had gone red and veiny. He hoped his nerves weren't as palpable as they felt.

"Stop fucking with me."

Dream's heart pattered against his rib cage. He felt where the lies burned his lips raw before they even spilled out in words.

"I'm not fucking with you."

He laughed like that would make it true, looked back up at George as if he had someone to convince. He did.

"I want to take you out, because you're cute and funny and I want to make it up to you for ruining your jeans."

None of those things were lies, but they still singed Dream's skin all the same. He wanted to know what he'd do with himself if— *when* —George said yes, how long he'd have to fake it (or not) before there was hell to pay.

It would end badly no matter what, wouldn't it?

"Okay." George sounded breathless, and Dream wondered if he was. "Uh... yeah," he laughed, "tell me that again when you're sober and I'll go out with you."

Dream laughed, too, and he could hear the strain in his own amusement. He hoped George was too distracted by the color on his own cheeks that he'd miss the stretch entirely.

"Can I kiss you?"

That question didn't burn, but Dream felt like it should've. Felt like it should've because even *he* found it unprompted, foreign in his own tone of voice, and left in the air with forgotten embellishment. It felt disingenuous even if he really did want George's mouth on his, because maybe it was all a ruse to make himself believe his own bullshit.

But George was laughing, because of course he was. George was laughing because he didn't know.

"Before you take me out?"

Dream swallowed thickly. He had never been so desperate to appear as he wasn't.

"Yeah."

George turned to look over his shoulder, the hand caught in a still-damp towel tightening to a white-knuckled grip. Dream waited for his eyes to return, waited for that pink and ivory grin to coax a smile across his own lips.

"In the bathroom," George started with a laugh, "at this lame fucking party?"

Dream shrugged. He found it in him to grin. "If you'll let me."

George swallowed this time, and the bob of his Adam's apple was borderline intoxicating. Dream knew it was obvious, the way he fixated on such a miniscule motion. He could feel that same sick tension where it filled the air between them, too thick to see through but hazy all the same.

“Yeah,” George answered with his eyes on the floor. “Okay. Let me close the door first.”

Dream didn’t say anything, only watched George as he turned around and shut the bathroom door tight. Watched his shaking hands fiddle with the lock, watched him turn around with the now-familiar shade of pink all over his face and glowing.

Dream stepped closer, and George did too. He wished he couldn’t see his own reflection through his peripheral vision, practically towering over George when they stood too close and ignoring the way that made his body go hot.

George’s breaths were shaky. Dream could feel them on his skin, could feel that brown-eyed gaze where it glided across his skin and landed on his lips.

“Kiss me,” George whispered, all the same air as the breaths from before.

And Dream wasn’t going to deny him; not when it had been his idea, not when he looked so pretty standing there in alcohol-soaked jeans, not when his tongue was still alight with lies and he’d never been so desperate to get rid of them all.

Their lips collided in the middle of all that tension. Dream tasted like the false security of a fruity drink at a college party, he tasted of spit and Dream and *boy*, and if he didn’t know any better he’d think George wanted to swallow him.

And George, *George*, he tasted just like Dream’s biggest mistake. Artificial sugar and the same kind of feigned precaution as the drink he’d spilled all over his jeans. His lips were dripping in well-known sweetness, in reckless abandon despite quiet voices and flashbacks to every other time Dream had screwed himself over.

He tasted like a dare, because that’s what he was.

But that didn’t stop Dream from kissing him like he was the last thing on earth, didn’t stop the dig of ivory teeth into sugary lips or the path of hands from shoulders to tiny waists. Maybe Dream was drunker than he thought, or maybe he was just stupid—either way his hands were pulling, lips pulling more until the only thing he could taste were pink lies.

George gasped into the kiss when he leaned closer, rising up on his toes so his hands could thread around Dream’s shoulders instead of just on top of them. And Dream could barely process the motion of his hands before they were pressed to the backs of George’s thighs, lifting him up off the ground and spinning until he was seated on top of the counter with a high sound spilled into Dream’s mouth.

This was not part of the plan; nor was it part of the dare. It probably would’ve wound up happening either way, but perhaps Sapnap wasn’t expecting Dream’s tongue to be down George’s throat until *after* they went on that fake date. But Dream was still tipsy and George was way prettier up close, and he found that in the short time between two minutes ago and right then he nearly craved the sugar on the fronts of George’s lips.

With their bodies slotted together in the bathroom of a once-proclaimed *lame party*, Dream wanted to know how he planned to get himself out of this fucking mess. Because no matter how hard he kissed George on the mouth, this would all come back to bite him one of these days.

When Dream emerged from the bathroom that night with red lips and a mark on his neck, Sapnap laughed harder than he had when he gave him the dare. And after being thoroughly referred to as an overachiever, Dream offered to call George a ride.

He would've driven him home himself, but he *was* still a little drunk. That, and he wasn't sure if his shaking hands would be able to hold the wheel properly. So he insisted on paying for George's ride home, called it another part of his mission to make up for those still-ruined jeans.

And then he went home himself. Didn't bother saying goodbye to anyone at the party because they'd be too drunk to remember it anyways, only drove himself home and laid face up in bed with a perfect view of the ceiling.

He wondered again what he'd gotten himself into. Then he fell asleep.

When he woke up the next morning, it was later than he wanted it to be and his headache split his skull in two. He found a text from George on his phone asking for a repeat of promises made when inebriated, and Dream realized that the only thing he'd forgotten was when they exchanged numbers.

He repeated everything he'd said out loud the previous night. And they planned a date. Dream wondered if the whole thing could end there, but something in him said it wouldn't; no matter how badly he wanted it to.

And it was like that. Like *this*. Objectively, it lasted far too long. Objectively, Dream should've quit while he was ahead. Objectively and undoubtedly he just shouldn't have taken the dare.

Maybe he drank too much that night. Maybe he knew he would've taken the dare even if he *was* sober.

Hypotheticals had always been stupid. Dream tried his best to live in the moment, even if the current moment left him feeling a little more than just sick.

Even if the sickly sweet soda they'd sipped from matching straws on their first date left Dream feeling like he'd just taken a kiss from the devil himself, even if he loved the way he tasted real sugar off George's lips pressed against the passenger side of his new car. It was the best fake first date Dream had ever had. It could've been the best first date he'd ever had.

When he got home that night—the sun long gone and the tingle of carbonation left behind on his burning tongue—there was far too much to think about if it meant turning out okay in the end.

One: George looked pretty in everything.

He'd worn a pair of denim shorts that Dream found shorter than he would've expected. He wasn't going to complain, *especially* not when it was George. And when he paired them with those stupid knee socks of his, when he'd had on a pair of worn-out sneakers that he let Dream comment on before they'd even said hello.

"Your shoes look well-loved."

"They've been a lot of places."

Dream couldn't stop himself from flirting when he felt the words rise up his throat, just as sick as bile but just as sweet as frosting. He tried to focus on the sweet vanilla where it coated the insides of his mouth.

"They'll go a lot more places with me."

George had laughed and turned as pink as the hoodie he was wearing. And he let Dream kiss the smile off his lips like he wasn't lying through his teeth, let Dream lick his way into his mouth

before they even got off his doorstep.

George had hit him on the shoulder. He told Dream they had somewhere to be, and Dream couldn't disagree with things that were true.

Two: Dream only liked soda when he got to share it with someone else.

Sapnap always made fun of him for avoiding fizzy drinks like they were the plague. Made fun of him because he'd still drink beer and champagne and vodka sodas, but Dream wouldn't be caught dead with a can of Sprite. It didn't even make sense to himself, but he felt like he owed something to George. And it wasn't just the ruined jeans.

So when he excitedly told Dream about his favorite soda shop down the street from campus, Dream couldn't say no. Not to George and his pretty smile, not to the way he bounced excitedly on the toes of those well-worn sneakers.

"You have to try their watermelon soda, it's my favorite."

"Watermelon soda is a thing?"

George called him an idiot. Dream had never been insulted so fondly before, and he tasted that word off George's watermelon-flavored lips—even before they drank the soda.

Dream didn't get sick off carbon bubbles the way he usually did. For once, he found comfort in the fizz against his tongue, and he figured that was the appeal for everyone else, too. The first sip had been the most jarring, mostly because George locked eyes with him when he had his lips wrapped around the second straw.

Three: Watermelon soda tasted way better than whatever the fuck he'd spilled on George's jeans the other night.

It didn't have that essence of lies or false security (Dream got enough of that on his own). All it was was sweet, sweet nothing, sugar and empty calories and a rush. It tasted like getting high on life, it tasted like bad decisions, it tasted like shitty dares in frat house living rooms and making out against the sink.

Maybe Dream was finding too much meaning in a glass of soda. Maybe George was finding too much truth in piercing green eyes.

"Do you look at everyone like that?"

"Only you."

And that one didn't burn.

Four: George was nice to everyone.

It was part of what made him so pleasantly easy to be around. Part of what made him so hard to lie to, so hard to keep a straight face when Dream did it anyways.

He was always smiling, he was always finding things to compliment on other people with every word he said. Dream had let him hold his hand when they walked up to the counter in that cute little shop, and he wondered how they'd managed to get so touchy so fast,

It was probably George. Not *probably*, it *was* George—he just wanted to have his fingers wrapped

up in Dream's, wanted to have his palm swallowed by a larger one when he looked too excited for it to only be a glass of pink fizz.

"I like your hair, is it blue?"

"Thank you! It is, blue's my favorite color."

"Me too!"

Dream wondered how he made kindness look so easy. Whatever it was, it looked damn good on him—Dream had never been more enthralled watching a fake boyfriend compliment the cashier on a first date. He could've been just as enthralled watching a real boyfriend say all the same things.

And he did the same thing again, and again, and again. Let someone take a chair from the table he and Dream were sitting at, flashed them a smile while he stirred his straw around aimlessly.

Dream was so desperate to keep the fondness off his face he wrapped his lips around his straw.

"I like your jacket."

"Thanks, it's new."

Dream could see the honesty in George's face. He wondered what it was like to have eyes like that, ones that looked for compliments in even the smallest interactions.

Five: Dream was jealous of everyone George was nice to.

And Dream already knew that George was nice to everyone. He already knew that his jealousy was misplaced, because even if George was his, George wasn't *his*. Dream tried—he really tried—to quell the rising fire in his gut whenever he watched George spill those pretty niceties, tried to quiet the voice inside him that said those words should be for him.

George didn't owe him anything, especially not compliments. Not after Dream had ruined his best jeans, not after Dream had lied to him and let him take him to his favorite place and drink his favorite flavored soda out of a shared glass.

"You remind me of cherry lollipops, I think."

"Is that a good thing?"

"You could only ever be good things."

Dream wanted to know where George had been hiding for his past two years of college. When he asked, George said he wasn't much of a party person; on the contrary, Dream was. Perhaps that had said something to do with it, perhaps they'd been accidentally avoiding each other without ever even knowing it.

And George was so fucking *nice*. Dream tasted kindness off his tongue like George tasted cherry lollipops, and he kissed him with a fire in that silly little shop's parking lot that he hoped everyone around them could feel. It was hot enough to burn his skin redder than his blood, and Dream still couldn't justify any of the twist hidden beneath the ivory of his rib cage.

He could not only ever be good things. He was being a bad thing by letting his lips get anywhere near George's, yet he still did it over and over and over again.

Six: Dates to cute little soda shops probably didn't take all day when they weren't with someone

like George.

When George had presented the idea, Dream expected to be home before sunrise. He did not expect to be stumbling into George's house at half-past midnight after they'd driven around for a few too many hours, he did not expect to still be tasting watermelon off his lips when they kissed each other stupid in the darkness of his kitchen.

Those well-worn vans stayed by the door next to Dream's boots. He'd never been so happy to replace one pink with another when he tore that too-cute hoodie off, and he'd swear he watched the world reinvent itself when he spread George out on his own fucking bed.

Dream left hickeys by George's collarbones despite himself. In hindsight, he wondered how hard Sapnap would tease him when he saw the splotches of violet and red.

"Did I hurt you?"

"You could never hurt me."

George was wrong, but he didn't know that. And with the prettiest boy in the world trapped between his strong arms, Dream found he had a penchant for making everything worse.

Seven: Dream was a filthy fucking liar, and one day, George would find out.

Six months. Six fucking months. Sapnap wouldn't stop telling Dream he was an idiot.

Sapnap was right every time.

If Dream thought he was in deep shit before, every passing day served to make things worse. Hindsight was 20/20, and the worst days were always the best ones; the ones where he forgot it was all fake. When he got so wrapped up in George and his pretty face and his artificial sugar that he forgot it was all supposedly a lie, when he forgot how they met and let himself get lost in swirls of chocolate brown.

It was the day after their six month anniversary. It wasn't a real anniversary, but George had pointed it out when he was half-dead and sweating with his head buried in Dream's chest. With large hands wrapped up in dark hair, Dream wished he was more than just *half* dead.

But now, it was the day after. And he still had a bruise on his chest where George had laved his mouth over his skin, hidden beneath the fabric of his shirt when he sat next to Sapnap on his couch looking for answers. Within himself, he found none. He wished he could go back in time.

"You have to tell him."

Dream wanted to slap the self-assured grin right off his best friend's face. Sapnap laughed because it wasn't his problem, Dream scowled because he wanted it to be his fault. It was always easier to deflect the blame, and it always seemed to stick to Sapnap on days like these.

"I can't," Dream said quietly, voice scratched around the edges in the same way his skin was turned purple. *"It'll ruin him."*

Sapnap shook his head with a sigh. Dream pretended he didn't see it, wrapping his hands up in each other until he was squeezing so hard his knuckles went white.

"You can just break up with him like normal," Sapnap said like it was obvious, *"he never has to*

know it was all bullshit.”

Dream thought about it. *Sapnap was right*. If he just found the right words, found more lies to end all the ones that had come first, then maybe it wouldn't hurt so bad. It was still hurt, Dream knew there was no avoiding that, but it wouldn't hurt the same as admitting to six months of lies.

“I don't think this is working out,” could taste so much better than *“I've been lying to you about why we got together.”*

But there was something else waiting for Dream in the depths of his mind, and even when he thought he found it, he wasn't sure if he wanted to drag it up to the surface on his own. He wasn't sure if he wanted to admit it to himself.

“Dream.” Sapnap's voice cut through every thought. “Dream, don't tell me you fell in love with him.”

Somehow, hearing it out loud made it worse. Dream felt where his breath caught in his throat, felt where his hands squeezed impossibly tighter around themselves. He didn't want to look Sapnap in the eyes when he told the truth so bluntly, so he found solace in the wall to his left.

There was a tense silence that waited for Dream's next words. He found them despite himself, perhaps lying right beneath a twisted purple bruise.

“I...” Dream hesitated, “yeah. I guess I did.” And he wanted to know if it would burn just as bad as everything else did. “I love him.”

It was colder than ice.

“You're a fucking idiot.”

So Dream looked back at Sapnap, gave him the harshest frown he could muster through the waves of nerves caught beneath his skin. And he searched so deftly for an excuse, because it was easier to deflect and ignore.

“This is your fault, you know,” Dream insisted. “You gave me that stupid dare.”

Sapnap laughed despite the weight of every word, shook his head where Dream burned holes into the skin of his face. And maybe his excuses were worse than Dream's, maybe he'd earned the right to be a fucking dumbass.

“It was funny!” he defended with a laugh. “I thought he'd say no, or maybe you'd go on one stupid date, and then nothing would come of it,” Dream scoffed, “I didn't realize you were going to put up this fucking act for six months of your life.”

Dream couldn't tell if his heart hurt or if his ribs were broken. Whatever it was, it sent nails digging into the skin on the backs of his hands.

“But it's not an act!” he said firmly, and even he was shocked by his own confidence.

Sapnap raised an eyebrow like he'd just said something stupid. In some ways, he had; but Dream knew where honesty was in his own tone of voice, even if the earnestness caught him off guard at first.

“Don't lie to yourself.” Sapnap laughed. “You asked the idiot out because I fucking told you to and you were drunk, there's no way around that.”

Dream took a deep breath. He almost wished it would get stuck in the center of his rib cage, never escape and leave him dead on the floor. Or maybe he didn't—whatever he *did* want, he wished it would end without a hurt look on his ~~fake~~-boyfriend's face.

“But I—”

Sapnap didn't let him finish. “You can't change the past, Dream.”

The “*I love him*” died on Dream's tongue like an old cliché. He'd seen and heard and grown sick of it a hundred thousand times, but he wondered if it would feel any different in his own tone and voice.

“But I can make up for it, right?” he tried, pulling his hands apart where he'd left crescent shapes etched into his skin. “Like I made up for spilling my drink all over his jeans.”

Sapnap raised both his eyebrows this time. Dream ran his finger over the carved-out shapes in his hands and felt the phantom taste of watermelon on his tongue.

“And how'd you do that?” Sapnap pried, urging Dream to swallow heavy and slow.

“I kissed him and took him out on a date.”

Sapnap scoffed. For some reason, it scorched Dream's ears a darker ebon than his own lies ever could. Maybe it was the voice that didn't sound like his own, maybe it was the fact that his best friend couldn't take anything seriously enough.

“Can you make up for six months of a fucking lie with a kiss and a date?”

Dream winced. *A fucking lie*. It didn't feel so much like a lie anymore, but he couldn't find it in him to spill his guts out on the floor.

“Probably not,” he whispered like he didn't want it to be true. He didn't.

Sapnap laughed again. It was abrasive. “Yeah, that's what I—”

“A fucking lie?”

The voice was far too familiar. Dream could feel right where it split him in two, whipping his head over his shoulder to find his favorite face in the whole world breaking into a million irreplaceable pieces. Dream wished he could take his words back, and maybe on the redo he'd admit to being in love.

“George,” he tried, but there were already tears on his once flushed face. “George, how long have you been standing there?”

Maybe if it had been long enough, then he'd know. But even Dream knew the world wasn't going to set things up to go his way, because he didn't deserve it.

“Long enough to know you're an asshole.”

And his voice broke over every word. Dream felt where it all broke his heart—or maybe his ribs, or maybe both—until he was left high and dry and too close to the floor. George had dug his nails into his palms, and it reminded Dream of the carvings etched into his own skin.

“George, please.”

His voice broke too. Either George didn't hear it or he didn't see what hid beneath it; Dream knew it was the latter, George was far too observant for his own good.

"No," he said without enough hesitation. "I don't want to fucking hear it, Dream, you're a fucking prick."

Dream swallowed, and it hurt. "Can I—"

"No," George interrupted, "your friend is right. A kiss and a stupid date won't make up for it, so just don't even fucking bother."

Those well-worn sneakers had never hit Dream's hardwood floors so heavy, but George had never stormed off before. Because they'd never fought, and they'd never argued, and Dream had never had to chase him down the hall with forgotten pleas left dying on his lips.

"George!" he called, watching where a hand took hold of the handle on his front door.

Every piece of himself ached. It was worse when George looked at the floor instead of his face, but he could still see the way his tears slipped onto the old tile floor.

It reminded Dream of something better.

"I never want to look at your stupid face again." George wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. "Just *go away*."

The door slammed when George left, perhaps for good. A phantom taste of watermelon never went sour no matter how much Dream wished it would; he still tasted every last lick of artificial sugar where it had been left on his tongue, pink and sweet and waiting for someone to share it with.

Dream cried himself stupid on cherry-flavored lollipops.

Long days and longer nights. Dream hated himself for ever thinking it was a good idea.

Maybe six months of nothing but pure bliss could make up for the three weeks of self-loathing he'd wasted that June. It was supposed to be summer, it was supposed to be *fun*, he should be drinking watermelon soda with George under the blazing sun.

But he wasn't. Instead, he was wasting away in his bed with all the curtains shut as tight as he could get them because he couldn't stomach the idea of standing up. And Sapnap had come to his house three times every week with apologies and concerns and food with more nutrients than empty sugar calories and head rushes because Dream wouldn't do it himself.

The first time, Sapnap said he called George. When Dream asked what he'd said, Sapnap said he never picked up the phone.

When Sapnap was there—and not talking about George or food or opening the curtains—time passed just a little bit faster. They could get distracted on nothing and everything, sidetracked on nonsense and all the things that didn't matter.

But in lonesome, Dream found other ways to waste his time. Like counting the cracks on the ceiling for the hundred thousandth time, or seeking solace in another broken lollipop, or pretending there was still watermelon soda buzzing at his tongue.

More than any of that, Dream ached. And he longed, and he *longed* for things to be the way they'd

been before, wished he could've been honest or found and met George a different, better way that didn't leave him in tears and rushing out the door.

They'd gone back to being strangers. Dream fell back on his list from their first date.

One: George looked pretty in everything.

Maybe he even looked pretty when he was crying. Dream figured that he couldn't *not* look pretty, because he was too busy being George. He was pretty in everything, just as Dream's own rules said, and what was true on the day of their first date had only grown truer with time.

Perhaps it was better that he hadn't paid close attention was George was nearly sobbing at his front door.

Two: Dream only liked soda when he got to share it with someone else.

Dream didn't drink soda without George. He tried, once, three days after they'd broken up; he'd complained about feeling sick and Sapnap had given him ginger ale with the promise it would make him feel better, because it always worked for him.

It made him feel worse.

The rush of bubbles across his tongue reminded him of better times, and the flavor wasn't good enough to distract him from the memory. Dream had cried. Sapnap didn't understand, but that wasn't the point.

Three: Watermelon soda tasted way better than whatever the fuck he'd spilled on George's jeans the other night.

Dream didn't want to think about George or those jeans or how good he'd looked wearing them. (Yes, he even looked good when they were soaked wet with alcohol). He didn't really want to think about sweet sugar watermelon, either.

Four: George was nice to everyone.

Asterisk: George was nice to everyone who deserved it. And Dream didn't deserve it anymore.

Five: Dream was jealous of everyone George was nice to.

It got even more true with time, and it hurt even more in tandem. Dream wanted George to be nice to him again—he wanted George to stop *ignoring* him. He was jealous of everyone that George chose to talk to, because he wasn't on that list anymore.

Dream would do anything for it to be the way it was again. Anything in the world to make himself hurt a little less. So he was jealous of everyone George was nice to, because George was nothing to him and he was nothing to George.

They meant different things.

Six: Dates to cute little soda shops probably didn't take all day when they weren't with someone like George.

Dream hadn't exactly tested that theory. He'd never gone on a date to a cute little soda shop with anyone who *wasn't* George, and he decided right then that he didn't want to. He didn't even want to go by himself; that silly little store had become something just a little bit more special than he

thought it would, and he wished that it hadn't been half built on lies the first time.

Seven: Dream was a filthy fucking liar, and one day, George would find out.

George found out, and Dream could never look at his own face in the mirror under the same light.

He'd clung to that bruise on his chest like it was the most important thing in the world. And he'd stare at it every day until it faded back into nothing, until the skin on his chest was blank the way it was before. He found comfort in a hoodie missing from his closet, the bright green one that George could never see right but stole from his room anyways.

Dream would've been content never seeing that sweatshirt again. He also would've been content to see George wear it again.

And because Dream was counting the days since George stormed out of his front door, he knew when it hit exactly three weeks. He knew that he was long overdue getting out of his house, sick and tired of relying on Sapnap to bring him things that kept him alive.

So with heavy limbs and waning motivation, Dream showered and got dressed. Brushed his teeth and pretended the sting of mint on his bleeding gums didn't remind him of domestic mornings in the very same bathroom, pretended that leaning his hips against the bathroom sink didn't remind of a different countertop altogether.

There seemed to be a lot of things to pretend in Dream's life. And when he spit blood into the sink, he pretended he didn't see that, either.

He wasn't even sure what he was going out for. There weren't any classes anymore and the campus was closed—not that he lived on campus—and every single thing to do in this stupid town reminded him of the person who still mattered most to him. But he figured it was nice enough to get fresh air and sunshine, even if the only thing he was doing was wandering down the sidewalk with a penchant for kicking stones.

In his lax-paced walk, Dream thought more. He ran down that too-familiar list again and wondered why he kept revisiting it. He almost wished he could forget, but was it worth everything to give up the happiest months of his life?

(It wasn't, he would gladly take this pain if it meant he got to keep the phantom fizz of watermelon on his lips).

In a strange twist of fate, Dream feigned blindness when he saw a familiar face on the other side of the street. Or maybe he only feigned ignorance, staring down at the lines of the sidewalk he was walking on and silencing the voice in his head that had never screamed so loud for him to look up.

It wasn't jealousy, because he was alone. It wasn't anger, because he didn't look happy. Maybe it was fear, fear that if he dared to lock eyes with him, he'd run in the other direction and Dream would never see him again. Maybe he was afraid of screamed curses from the other side of the road, maybe he was worried that the fingers tapping on his shoulder were all in his head.

What?

They weren't.

When Dream turned around, he had to look down to meet George's eyes. A tense air that had gone unfamiliar returned to the space between them, and Dream figured they could've cut it with a knife.

The red around George's eyes hurt him just as much as he thought it would, but he was still a pretty crier.

"George?" Dream asked, and he didn't expect the strain of his underused voice.

"Dream."

George's voice was scratched, too. And he swallowed around the name like he hadn't said it at all for the past three weeks, and maybe he hadn't. Dream could probably count the number of times he'd said George's name, a sick comparison when he thought of how often he used to call it out through fits of laughter.

"I miss you."

Dream spit before he could think, drags of sick pink trailing down his unknissed lips. It wasn't anything like the blood he could still taste off his teeth, but the colors matched too closely.

"You hurt me."

The way George's words broke around the edges left Dream's rib cage in a little more ruin than it had already been in. He wondered if every breath would hurt for the rest of his life, or just until George gave back all the air he'd stolen from his lungs.

"I didn't want to," Dream confessed, but it never felt like a secret.

And if words said a thousand things, then actions said a hundred thousand more. It was an old saying—and sometimes, it meant Dream could kiss George stupid without saying he loved him, and sometimes, it meant the figurative bruises on George's skin were already too dark to fade.

"But you did."

Umber eyes fell to the sidewalk between them. Dream wanted to take his chin and tip his head back up, but he clenched his fist instead.

"I know," he whispered. "And I'm sorry, I really am."

Maybe if he apologized enough, George would believe him. He didn't even have to forgive Dream, he just had to know he was sorry—and judging by the break in his irises, he already did.

"Why would you..." George started, but his hesitation killed the next word before it ever got to his lips. "It's a sick dare, Dream," he argued. "Cruel."

Dream swallowed thickly. He felt where the regret ran across his tongue, where it slid down his throat with more difficulty than he thought it would until he was drowning in asphyxiation.

"I know," Dream agreed. "I was drunk."

George scoffed, but even then it sounded like a fought-off laugh. Dream lifted his eyes up off the ground to find his ex-boyfriend's shaking head, find where he was staring out across the street at the lone red car that dared to pass them by. He waited for the rush to fade from their ears before he parted his lips again.

"You didn't have to keep it up for so long."

Dream knew he was right. The only modifier was the truth, and maybe that was the one that George didn't know yet.

“But I loved you,” Dream defended, finding venom in his past tense. “But I...” he nearly didn’t say it, “I *love* you. That wasn’t a part of the plan.”

There was a place in George’s eyes that widened a little more than the rest of it. Spilling pools of ink-black over dark brown paper, nearly the same color all along but swallowing in their spreading cover. Dream found it endearing, and he wondered if his eyes did the same to greenscreens.

“Would you have ever told me?” George whispered, and those swollen eyes fell back to the ground before he could hear the answer.

“One day,” Dream matched him in hush, “I would’ve. In a better way than you overhearing it.”

Gazes locked like they’d never fallen apart. Dream could see the world turn in those pretty brown eyes, and he hoped the same could be said about emerald.

“I...” George’s eyes flickered, but they never fell away, “I loved you, too. I’ve always been too scared to say it, but maybe I’ve loved you since the first time you kissed me.”

Dream let himself laugh. The sound felt unfamiliar on his own, sugar-lacking lips.

“In the bathroom at that lame party?”

George laughed, too. It was more refreshing than anything else could ever be, and Dream would forever be chasing more of it.

“Yeah,” George agreed, “then.” And the grin on his face dared to challenge Dream to smile. “I don’t say yes to everyone who asks to kiss me, you know.”

Dream wanted to reach out and touch him. He wondered if it was the right time yet, if it had been long enough since his last apology and the start of nails dug into the flesh of his palms.

He let those crescent shapes etch deeper.

“You’re cute,” he insisted instead of action. “And funny. And I want to make it up to you for lying about why I even walked into that bathroom in the first place.”

George’s eyelids fluttered, but he looked up at Dream with hope in his gaze. “Another date?”

Dream shrugged with ease, but nothing about this felt easy. “If you’ll come with me.”

George laughed like it was obvious. Smiled against the back of his hand the way he used to. Dream didn’t realize how much he’d missed the little things until he had them back in his clumsy hands.

“Of course.”

So they went someplace they knew. Walked there like it wasn’t a little too far away, and as always, George was the one to slip their fingers together when they reached the halfway point. Dream held onto his hand like he might never get to again, because life was fleeting and he had everything he wanted right then.

They got watermelon soda, per Dream’s request, this time. For some reason, George seemed surprised that he’d remembered, but they sat in the same place they did the first time and locked eyes over artificial pink.

Dream tasted real sugar off those pretty pink lips when he kissed George stupid under the moonlight outside his house.

End Notes

yea sapnap's kind of a dick in this lol sorry sapnap ,, it's not the first time i've done that

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